



what matters



Introduction

Licensed early learning and child care is an important support for many Manitoba families. As more families choose to make Manitoba their home, we are continuing to build and look for ways to improve early learning and child care across our province.

Together, we have accomplished a lot in the past decade, thanks to the hard work of parents, community boards and those working in the licensed sector. Steady investments by government have created stability and given community partners the peace of mind that comes with knowing that government is on your side.

A little over five years ago, the global economy faltered. Governments, families and individuals around the world were faced with tough decisions. Here in Manitoba, we came up with a plan to protect families and jobs. This included protecting early learning and child care by increasing funding and setting up a capital building fund to build new and expand existing centres and by providing funding for 6,500 more spaces.

We are still dealing with the effects of the global economic downturn today. When faced with uncertainty, other governments have chosen to cut funding for child care. We are choosing to continue making steady investments because we know that if we want to continue building our province, there is no other way. Investing in early learning and child care is not only a smart economic decision – it is the right decision for Manitoba families.

For parents, having access to licensed, affordable, high quality early learning and child care makes a world of difference because it means:

- having the choice to go back to work or to get that first job
- upgrading skills, education and training
- not having to worry about the comfort, safety and well-being of children during the work or school day

Children benefit very much from having great places to learn and grow by:

- participating in fun, educational activities that will help lay the foundation for lifelong learning
- making friends and developing important social skills
- feeling the safety and security they need to learn and grow

Early learning and child care also does great things for **Mani oba' econom** by:

- getting people with the skills we need into jobs – and making sure employers don't lose them after they have children
- offering parents peace of mind during the work day, so that they can work hard, be creative and reach their full potential
- giving the next generation of skilled workers a strong start

As Manitoba's population and economy continue to grow, it is very important that we continue to invest for the future through a strong system of early learning and child care. These investments will pay off today and for years to come as, together, we raise the next generation of parents and skilled workers that will continue to build and grow our province.

Building on Past Successes

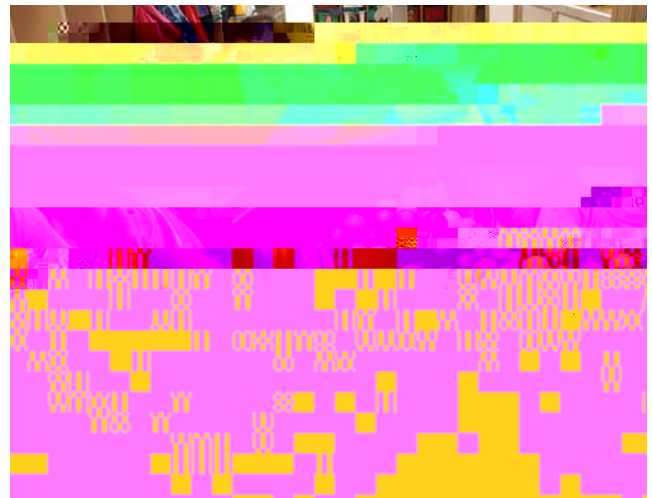
Over the course of Manitoba's previous multi-year plans, early learning and child care has grown and developed to help meet the needs of children and families across the province. Since 1999, the province has:

- nearly tripled annual funding for child care to more than \$147 million
- funded more than 12,600 child care spaces, an increase of over 80 per cent
- committed funding to build or expand more than 100 child care centres
- increased wages by nearly 60 per cent and introduced a province-wide pension plan for child care workers
- introduced age-appropriate curricula and enhanced quality programming
- kept Manitoba child care the most affordable in Canada outside of Quebec

These investments are part of the Manitoba Plan to Expand Early Learning and Child Care.

Listening to Manitobans

In fall 2013, Deanne Crothers, MLA for St. James,



What We Heard:

-

1. Building and Expanding

Manitobans have told us that continuing to build the licensed early learning and child care system is a priority for them, even in these uncertain economic times. We will not put the gains that have been made over the past decade at risk by making cuts that might help the government's bottom line today but would hurt families well into the future.

Because so many Manitoba families rely on quality early learning and child care to help them be successful and contribute to the economy by working or furthering their education, we know that we must continue to

5. Improving Quality, Diversity and Inclusion

Together, we have made great strides in improving quality and maintaining high standards of care in recent years. The Manitoba government is committed to supporting high quality, inclusive practices in licensed early learning and child care centres, nursery schools and family and group child care homes. Quality programs address the individual abilities and needs of each child and community.

Diversity and inclusion will continue to be a key focus of our early learning and child care system.

We will continue to enhance quality programming for children in licensed early learning and child care settings with the support of a centralized quality enhancement team.

New resources will be made available to help providers meet regulated standards but also, to continue to improve the quality of their programs.

We will explore opportunities with post-secondary institutions teaching early childhood education for ways to enhance high quality programming by supporting demonstration sites where students can experience quality programming in action.

We know that children who need additional supports must be included and accommodated in the early learning and child care system. To further support their inclusion, Manitoba will develop new models and practices to support these important services.

We will also explore, with stakeholders, ways to support quality early learning programs for Aboriginal children.

While the delivery of early learning and child care programs in First Nations communities remains the jurisdiction of the federal government in conjunction with First Nations, Manitoba will continue discussions with these partners to work together to improve child care standards in Manitoba First Nations communities.



6. Exploring Future Change

Over time, the needs of families change. Systems must be reviewed and revised to meet these diverse and evolving needs.

The Manitoba government will establish a Commission on Early Learning and Child Care to explore the needs of families and the delivery of early learning and child care in the province. The commission will look at ways to re-design Manitoba's system of early learning child care and guide our future plans.

Consideration will also be given to ways to create stronger links between our early learning and child care centres and our schools to help make life easier for working families. We are committed to strengthening these connections, which is why we already require that all new schools must include child care centres. More than 16 projects are currently underway to create or expand child care centres in schools. Since 2008, 30 child care centre projects have been completed in Manitoba schools.

The commission will ensure the voices of parents, the workforce and stakeholders help guide the system's future development.



For more information visit:
www.manitoba.ca/childcare